

canadian camping



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TELEPHONE (416) 488-7345

AND HOW WAS YOUR SUMMER?

—evaluating your camp

by barry lowes

When the summer ends there is a natural inclination to breathe a sigh of relief that all has gone well and the campers are all safely back home. Sometime this fall, take time to sit with your feet up, and reflect upon summer. This is the beginning of an evaluation of the camp.

Evaluating means: What went well? Why? What could we have done better? If we could begin this summer all over again, what would we do differently?

Evaluating is important because professionally we want to improve or upgrade the level of our camp operation and performance.

We should evaluate everything! There is no aspect of your camp, including yourself, that should escape the strong light of scrutiny.

The Director's attitude sets the tone. Whether it will be searching, penetrating and worthwhile or whether it will be perfunctory and therefore worthless will depend primarily upon your ATTITUDE.

Are you defensive or open? You can't hide your true attitude towards evaluation. it will show through.

(cont. on page 4)

A Director's Checklist

by Eanswythe Flynn

In response to many requests we are reprinting the first of a series of columns by Mrs. Flynn entitled "Do it Now! A Camp Director's Check List".

The second column will appear in the December 1977 issue. We hope you will be able to incorporate some of these ideas into your own list of "things that must be done".

NOVEMBER

On last visit to camp, check cabins for mice nests, broken windows, etc.

When leaves have fallen, check for necessary tree cutting and brushing.

Make follow-through arrangements with maintenance staff or local woodsman who "knows how".

Reprint camp folder, using new photographs and copy if necessary. ("Canadian Camping" May, 1977)

Check supply of letter head and envelopes, statement forms and any other needed stationery. What about staff contract forms and invoices?

Plan Camp Reunion during Christmas Holidays. Perhaps a theatre party or another kind of special event: include parents as well.

Review camp activities for new ideas, new skills, new programme emphases.

DECEMBER

Order and prepare for mailing all Christmas Cards.

Have maintenance staff prepare for winter... watch for snow load on roofs, fallen trees, care of water supply in winterized buildings, sagging hydro wires.

Agency camps should investigate the availability of surplus commodities and

supplies. These can be available for the asking, but requests should be in early. This includes "scraps" from arts and craft supply houses, linoleum and carpet ends, clearance of fire-damaged goods which can be used in arts and crafts, drama etc.

Take some responsibility with your Provincial Camping Association, and remember that your suggestions, as well as news or happenings from your province or your own Association will be of the greatest interest to readers of Canadian Camping across Canada.

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COVER We have incorporated the cover of the "Canadian Camping" Magazine, Vol. 27 No. 1 to Vol. 28 No.3, designed by Violet Catlin, Graphics, 4 Canzone Dr., Toronto, into the front page of this and the previous six newsletters.

FOOD and FINANCE

SOME PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS TO KEEP COSTS DOWN

With inflation sending food costs into the upper stratosphere, camp budgets could take a severe beating unless care is taken in purchasing, preparing, and serving the food. The following suggestions may be helpful. They first appeared in CAMPING, the magazine of the American Camping Association.

1. Know what to buy. Consider grades other than Fancy. Standard grade costs less and has just the same nutritive value.
2. The price of a case of canned goods is directly linked to the yield. What is most important is how much usable produce will you get out of the case. This is what you are paying for..... not six cans to the case.
3. Review your menus to determine effective substitution of items in more plentiful supply. Eliminate items that historically end up in the garbage can.
4. Institute a training program for kitchen help and servers, emphasizing the necessity of eliminating wastefulness in handling and serving food.
5. Check your kitchen equipment, particularly your production equipment, to assure proper performance. Don't believe your thermostats, check them for accuracy. Faulty equipment can result not only in food loss but impair the orderly and efficient operation of your kitchen.
6. Don't overcook. Prepare what you need with the minimum over for additional helpings.
7. Make your distributor salesman work for you. He should have the knowledge and information to assist you in determining the best pack and yields; what the best buys are; what new items are available; what items are in short supply and what items are plentiful; menu information; assurance of supply at fair prices.
8. Increase your initial orders. Larger orders are more desirable and help eliminate extra deliveries during the season. This can help in securing preferred pricing.
9. Increasing storage facilities is urgent. Proper facilities for pre-season purchasing and storage can save many dollars.

In view of the phenomenal price increases in some food items.... sugar, for example, increased over 400% in a two year period, affecting all other products in which sugar is a major component....anything that will keep down food costs should be investigated. Good food is an essential at any camp, but food wastage, or poor purchasing, should be scrupulously avoided.

Is it evident that you welcome criticism? Do staff tell you what they believe you want to hear or do they know that you honestly want and respect their opinions and will consider carefully their recommendations.

You aren't obliged to agree!

You should consider their suggestions carefully, discuss them fully and share your reasons for not carrying out some of their recommendations; for example, budget, staff, timing, agency policy, etc.

Criticism has a bad reputation. It is usually seen as being negative. It can be positive, a healthy exercise, an educational experience. It need not be equated with skinning someone alive.

Everyone should be given an opportunity to evaluate. Some directors will say "I don't need all this democratic fallderrall. I know what's going on". Sure you do but so do others. It is a matter of perception and perspective. Each aspect of camp looks different when perceived by different people in camp.

The Campers

Who has a greater right to evaluate camp than the campers? They are your clients. Surely you want to know how they feel. Hold discussions within each cabin group. Depending upon the age, they may or may not need help from a staff member. Consider brief evaluation forms which obtain their reactions to activities, food, staff, etc. Do this anonymously. Handwriting will enable you to determine roughly the age group. (You might send out a questionnaire to some campers this fall.)

The Counsellor-in-Training

They should evaluate their own program, verbally through discussions and also in writing. In turn they have, like all staff, a right to know how they are doing during the season and a final evaluation of how they did overall at the end of the summer. These should be both written and oral, carried out by the staff who have had the best opportunity to observe the C.I.T. first-hand. The C.I.T. has a right to discuss the report with the person doing them. It is a basic human right and also a sound evaluation technique.

The Counsellors

Have them write brief reports on their campers. Reports which help them to focus upon each child and indicate that they have had some goals and some insights into the camper. These are brief, confidential and must be written candidly to be of value.

Some camps have the staff write a final letter to parents. If you can find counsellors who can spell, write a grammatically correct sentence and couch the letter in acceptable terms then you are lucky. I tell all parents that we have reports and that I would be glad to share their contents upon request. The director then answers such requests.

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Counsellors, should also do an anonymous evaluation on the camp from their vantage point. What did they expect from the summer? What did they find? Ask about supervision. Too little, too heavy, helpful, hindrance? Ask for any recommendations for improving camp. You may not like everything you read, but it is important that you know how they feel.

The Unit or Section Heads

They do evaluations on all staff. We do formal brief, sit-down evaluations of staff at the end of the first few days, in order to determine whether or not he or she is off to a sound start. Does she know her campers? Questions will determine whether or not she really knows what is happening to them and how each camper is faring.

We have each counsellor do a self-evaluation at the mid-point in the summer. They fill out the same form that the unit head will use at the end of the summer. The form serves as an agenda for a discussion. It is a valuable device for helping staff to become full of insight about themselves.

At the end of the summer each counsellor has a final evaluation to learn how others have viewed his summer - how he did.

If time permits a director should sit down with each counsellor before she leaves camp. If this is not possible then an interview during the winter serves in part as an evaluation of the counsellor's past summer and a look ahead to the next.

Be positive! Find good things to praise as well as some areas that need attention and strengthening. Evaluation should not be synonymous with "put-down".

The Instructors

Each specialty counsellor or instructor should sit down and evaluate their activity.

What went well? Why? What could we have done better? What innovations did we try? How well did they work? What would they recommend for next year that would improve their activity? Get them to put their ideas on paper and give them to you. Ask them to think in terms of facilities, equipment, staff, program ideas, etc.

It is vital that each specialist make an accurate inventory of the equipment under headings such as: Item of Equipment, Quantity, Good Condition, Need Repairs, Discard Quantity to Purchase Next Year, Where is it Stored? This last item is so important, if you aren't to spend frustrating hours and days next spring with a new staff member trying to guess where last year's specialist stored something away.

The Senior Staff

Time has to be found towards the middle of camp and again at the end for senior staff to evaluate every department of camp, as seen from their vantage point. It is ideal if they can remain at camp a few days at the end of the season. This permits a much more relaxed and thorough evaluation, free from the inevitable interruptions.

The Kitchen Staff

This is the biggest, most costly and to many campers the most important department in camp. Kitchen staff are not machines, they are people. Consult them. Who knows better than those in the kitchen what is going well and what needs to be improved and how?

Everything from equipment, facilities, use of available kitchen area, systems, me-

thods of service, staffing, menus, preparation, deliveries, purchasing, garbage, etc all need to be studied and evaluated.

Health Services

Equipment, facilities, hours, procedures, medical supplies, health forms, inventory, follow-up medical letters are all part of an evaluation of this area. Have the staff submit a written comment.

The Maintenance Staff

Don't overlook your maintenance staff. They should know what needs to be looked after during the off-season. From the evaluations of every other department in camp you should be able to compile lists of indoor, outdoor, major and minor maintenance jobs that need to be done before camp opens next year. You must categorize them, then set priorities, according to time, funds and staff available. In this way you can set out a work schedule that will ensure that camp is in A-1 condition when you open next year.

Others

Take any department in camp and apply these same principles and techniques to evaluating each one.

The Parents

Entrusted to your care is their most precious possession. What were their expectations? How do they feel about their child's camping experience? More than anything else, they will sell your camp to others or sink you, depending upon how satisfied or unsatisfied they were. Their unsolicited letters both good and bad are an important evaluation too!

If they are bad, look into the matter and then follow-up, not with excuses but with a full account of what your investigation turned up, together with an apology if warranted

You may never hear from some parents. Their child just doesn't return. Don't shrug it off. Send out an anonymous questionnaire to find out why? The replies could be very revealing.

The Directors

Collate all of these reports. From them develop lists of repairs, items to be purchased, staff to be rehired, programs to change, etc. Re-read these reports and recommendations after camp when both the glow and the pain have subsided. Use them to plan for an even better summer next year.

I re-read them again just before camp opens and once more at the end of the first week to be sure that we have followed up on and are really acting upon the recommendations of last year. It is a valuable check on how you are doing. Do you talk about change and improvements or do you really make it happen?

Evaluation is most effective when it goes on all year round, but there are a few special times to originate certain actions, to make the evaluation easier.

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During the Summer

Show staff the forms they will be using before camp begins so that they will know what is expected of them. Invite staff to suggest improvements to the evaluation forms and process itself.

Review the previous year's recommendations with this year's department heads. At the end of the first week check back with each staff member involved to ensure that recommendations are being carried out.

It angers me to hear someone say "it's too late to change this year". The devil it is! We have made major changes on the second last day of camp in order to see some idea in action and thus obtain some first-hand assessment. Rather than theorizing all winter, trying it at the beginning of next summer and finding out then that it won't work. Coasting can be a disease that sets into a camp, after mid-term unless you are prepared to continually evaluate, improve and if necessary change at any time. In particular, every department should have a thorough evaluation at mid-term. Review your goals.....on target? How could we improve further?

At the End of the Summer

We have discussed earlier some of the ways to evaluate and who evaluates at the end of the summer. Set deadlines for completing evaluations. The end of camp is a busy, even hectic time. If you do not provide time for written and oral evaluation, they will be done hastily and prove to be of little worth.

After the Summer

Free from the day-to-day pressures of directing camp, you can take time to review, reflect and decide from among the many recommendations you will receive. Make some tentative decisions immediately while everything is fresh in your mind. Make notes. Then set these aside for a month or two. Come back to them and you will find that your perspective has changed.

Meet with your staff to review last summer and plan for next. Share this process with others, those who will be most affected by your decisions. This process continues all winter as you meet to interview and rehire staff.

There will be casual meetings on the path or on the dock. There must also be time set aside and scheduled in which to meet each person. Keep a list of those whom you have seen and when. If you don't do this you find that at the end of the summer there are staff whom you have missed.

What Tools Do you Use to Evaluate?

We have already discussed written reports and forms, verbal evaluations, letters to and from parents. It is important that some of your evaluations are anonymous, otherwise you will not get straight answers and incisive recommendations. This applies especially when asking campers, staff and parents to evaluate the camp.

You must be sure to let staff know who will have access to the evaluations. Confidentiality is vital!

What Do You Do With the Evaluations?

Use them! Don't file them away or else everyone's efforts have been wasted. Paper

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Can good P.R. sell your camp ?

It sure can help !

Reprinted from an article by Rona Wasserman which appeared in Camping Magazine, November/December 1971, the official publication of the American Camping Assn.

It doesn't matter if you've never sold anything ... if you believe strongly in what you have to sell, good public relations can help sell it for you. And, as camping people, aren't we trying to "sell" parents on sending their children to our camps?

The best salesmen, of course, are the campers who have had a happy, relaxed and exciting summer at camp ... most of our new campers are referrals from former campers. But even happy campers and staff need a back-up sales force. Our camp carries on a complete program of public relations with campers, parents and potential camper families.

The first contact is with the campers who have just left camp. In September we send each one a questionnaire to get their feelings about the camp experience and their suggestions for next year. They know we will take them seriously, both from past questionnaire results, and from our camper councils during the summer. If they really prefer hamburgers to the extent that they write "NO ROSTE BEEF" .. who are we to insist on serving roast beef every week?

Every camper who filled out the questionnaire last year, except one, planned to return the following season. That little girl filled out the entire form, telling us everything she liked at camp, which campers she'd like to bunk with next time, the counsellors she liked the best, and a new place for a trip. Then on the question "..... are you planning to be back at Naticook next year?" she printed in bold letters, "DEFINITELY NOT. NO NEVER."

The questionnaire return is high, and the answers to the last question provide names and addresses of children who are friends and relatives of campers.

KEEP CONTINUOUS CONTACT

Starting in November, we send something to camper families every month. In November we mail a Yearbook to each camper, counsellor and prospect name obtained from questionnaires. This in turn brings in new questionnaires. About half our prospects are sold by the Yearbook. It is imperfect, photo-offset, obviously written by children. The pictures are not professional. But the Yearbook gives the feeling of the camp much better than the slick brochure we used 18 years ago when we first began.

In December we invite parents to enroll their children, letting them know we'll bill them for deposit in January. Our card is typed so that parents have only to sign and return it. Campers are promised an "early sign-up appreciation souvenir" for December enrollments. Last year, more than half our enrollment was by the end of December.

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As we receive each camper's enrollment card, we write a personal note, letting him know how happy we are that he'll be with us again. Campers returning for second, third seasons, etc. receive different souvenirs - pennants, banners, camp nightshirts and so on.

A January Newsletter gives names and hometowns of new campers, and includes a welcome plus thanks to those who referred them. We also include messages from our foreign counsellors.

In February, we send parents their first information sheet and a clothing list for each child. A March Newsletter notes returning counsellors, more new campers, new counsellors, and information on "what's new at Naticook." Each mailing results in phone calls, letters and those beautiful firm referrals. And so we continue the information sheets to parents and Newsletters to campers right up to opening day.

Some parents want to meet us, and we invite them to our home. We also make visits, frequently out of state. We no longer use slides as we once did, but now use three albums of photos instead. One covers all the activities at camp and the other two are filled with pictures of the previous summer. The children get very excited on seeing their friends in the camp pictures.

Most parents, having been presold by former campers and satisfied parents, just chat. But occasionally we do get the third degree. Last year, all but two sets of parents who came to see us enrolled their children within a week.

As soon as the new camper is enrolled, we send him a welcome note, and an emblem to put on a jacket or shirt; his parents get a note, questionnaire and return envelope. These new campers, before even having attended camp, start to refer their friends. Many referrals come for children of friends or out of state counsellors.

The outstanding element in our having a truly memorable season is, we all agree, our counsellor staff. They were sold on camp during orientation: we had fun working together on a counsellor show; we fed them well; on-the-spot training was provided where needed; and we gave them all the tools we could to help them be effective counsellors.

During the season, the administrative staff is always available to listen or help. The swimming pool and social hall are open to counsellors at night. There is always food in our refrigerator and a comfortable chair in front of the fire in our home. Relaxed counsellors talk easily about children, camp and personal problems.

They, in turn, give us their all .. sometimes even performing over their heads. They play with campers even when unassigned. They honour our requests for cleanliness, sobriety and no pot-smoking, and we don't ask them to give up their long hair and beards.

We are fortunate in having a loyal, capable administrative staff, who leave us free to be with the children most of the time. There probably are some reasons we don't know about, but we have to give a big share of the credit for our healthy enrollment picture to our thriving, busy public relations program.

Dr. and Mrs. Joshua Wasserman are owners and directors of Camp Naticook, N.H. Mrs. Wasserman is a former Public Relations Chairman for A.C.A.'s Region I.

C.C.A. NATIONAL CONFERENCE

Geneva Park, Ontario

January 19-22, 1978.

Through the co-operation of Recreation Canada and the Canadian Camping Association, the third National Conference will be held January 19 - 22, 1978.

Delegates must be in Toronto no later than 2:00 P.M. Thursday, January 19th, and all delegates will be returned to Toronto no earlier than 2:00 P.M. Sunday, January 22nd.

There will be many phases to the Conference, but the highlight theme will be "Keys to Success"... factors which determine the degree to which a camp is and can be successful.

Programme:

The opening Session will be directed primarily to the identification of those "Keys". Friday will deal with the effective Management of Time.....theory and a particular emphasis on the ways and means in which the theories can be applied to our own particular needs in the camping profession. The leader for the Friday session will be Mr. David Bratten, Employee Relations Manager, Gescan Division, Canadian General Electric.

The sessions on Friday evening, and throughout Saturday will deal more specifically with problems (and we hope, some solutions) related to Staff, Campers and the Site.

Speakers for these specific sessions will be from across Canada, and as a result, a wide selection of views and experiences can be shared.

The conclusion on Sunday morning will be organized on a Provincial basis with matters relating to the ways and means in which information and suggestions from the previous three days can be related to camps in each Province.

Cost per delegate will be \$75.00.

Economy Air Fare return to Toronto will be covered for those outside of Ontario. Administration and Room and Board costs will be covered for every delegate, along with transportation to and from Geneva Park and Toronto.

Delegates are selected by each Provincial Camping Association. It will be up to the Provincial Organizations to determine who shall attend.... but if selected, the C.C.A. seeks the delegates' commitment throughout the entire Conference... and if some 'research' or 'homework' is necessary prior to the conference, we would expect that in order to gain full benefit from the four days, each delegate would follow through to the best of his or her ability.

The range of delegates attending this Conference should be interesting for it is hoped that there will be content of a level appealing to not only very experienced Directors, but those who are involved in organized camping for the
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GENEVA PARK CONFERENCE

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first time. Senior staff may also be included in the selection of delegates... but once again this is up to the discretion of the Provincial Association ... choosing as it sees fit, in order to raise the standards of camping in each Province and in turn, right across Canada. The follow-up to a Conference of this magnitude, is that all delegates are urged to return to their own Associations and hold workshops and training sessions related to the Geneva Park Conference.

REGISTRATIONS MUST BE RECEIVED IN THE C.C.A. OFFICE NO LATER THAN THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 10.

It is essential that the committee know the names and addresses of every delegate so that correspondence and final details can be sent directly to the individuals involved.

NATIONAL WOODSMANSHIP SCHOOL

The school was held at Kandalore, near Minden, Ontario from May 30 to June 12. The foundation of the school consists of three major components:

- an inventory of woodsmanship skills, pursuits and encounters;
- the art and science of leadership in reference to those skills;
- constant reference to the land ethic.

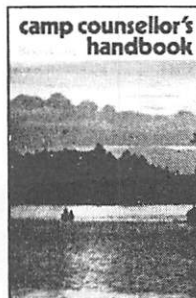
Some modification was introduced in the manner in which these three thrusts were fused and the sophistication by which they were presented. Perhaps the most important of the several innovations made was the backpacking field exercise in which complementary leadership (2 persons) was provided for each of four groups. In these a set of curriculum contents was prescribed for the leaders and candidates in order to take advantage of the 4½ day outing. In addition, the areas of safety,

rescue and evacuation, and wilderness first aid procedures were reinforced.

Under the leadership of the Director, Mr. Kirk Wipper and the Associate Director, Mr. Peter Jarvis, 8 full time instructors and 13 part time specialists led 36 candidates through the newly published National Woodsmanship Leaders School Information and Syllabus.

One of the purposes of the National School is to assure the development of a core of leaders who can conduct a series of Regional Woodsmanship Schools along the model established by the national version. To this end, the following awards were presented upon completion of the course: 5 Honour Certificates, 21 Standard Certificates, and 10 letters of attendance.

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This book is being reprinted, but not in hardcover, so take advantage of this opportunity NOW!

HOW TO EVALUATE YOUR CAMP

(cont. from page 7)

work must be kept to a minimum. Only require reports that will be read and studied and used.

Get a large loose-leaf notebook and divide it into sections for each department and area of your camp operation. By entering recommendations in each section you have a handy complete reference for all of them in one convenient place. Year by year you will build up a valuable historical pattern of evaluations, recommendations and results, department by department.

The companion piece to the three ring notebook is the small pocket-size notebook. Carry it in your pocket and use it to jot down ideas and reminders to yourself, hour by hour as you move about camp. Even a genius cannot remember every detail. Besides one of the most satisfying experiences is crossing something off your notebook as "done".

These are some ideas and suggestions which I hope will serve as catalysts to your thinking. or a framework upon which you can build a system of evaluation that best meets your particular needs.

The ultimate evaluation is:

How many of your campers and staff want to return to camp this summer?

Turnover is your barometer of success.

To grow, a camp must constantly evaluate its operation or sink inevitably into stagnation.

This article has been adapted from
an earlier presentation by Mr. Lowes

Miss Janie McCutcheon
109 Grand Ave. Apt. 32
London, Ont. N6C 1L9

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SUITE 203, 102 EGLINTON AVENUE EAST
TORONTO, ONTARIO M4P 1E1

